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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, December 23, 1931.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Fixing Chicken for Christmas." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics and the Bureau of Plant Industry, U.S.D.A. Paragraph from the Parents' Magazine.

Just after I finished talking to you yesterday about the inexpensive Christmas dinner, along came the mailman bringing me three letters asking for advice on fixing chicken for Christmas and for a menu to go with the chicken. I expect that the writers of those three letters listened in on the chat for Monday, so they have menu suggestions already. But I'm delighted to take a few minutes off this morning and describe the process of preparing roast chicken with savory stuffing.

I hope you have a four to five pound plump young chicken, for roasting. For a big family, of course, you'll need more than one. If your chicken is young and tender, roast it in an uncovered pan. If it is an older bird, follow the same method of cooking but use a covered roaster.

First, of course, you draw the chicken. Remove the pin feathers and oil sac, wash the chicken and wipe it dry both inside and out. Now, it's ready for stuffing.

Have you your pencil handy? If you have, perhaps you'd like to take down the ingredients for the savory stuffing. Here they are.

4 tablespoons of butter or other fat
1 cup of chopped celery and leaves
2 tablespoons of chopped onion
2 or 3 sprigs of parsley, cut fine
2 cups of fine bread crumbs
1/2 teaspoon of salt
Pepper, and
1/4 teaspoon of savory seasoning

Shall I go over these again? (Repeat.)

Now, then, to make that stuffing. First, melt the fat in your skillet. Next, add the celery, onion and parsley and cook for a few minutes. Then, add the bread crumbs and seasonings and stir until well mixed and hot.

There's your stuffing all ready to go inside the plump, young chicken. First sprinkle salt inside the chicken. Then fill the cavity lightly with the hot stuffing. If the chicken is dressed properly, there's no necessity for sewing in the stuffing. Fold the wings back on the neck. And tuck the legs into that band of skin and flesh below the tail. Rub the surface of the chicken with butter. Then sprinkle it with salt, pepper and flour.

Now set it on a rack in an open roasting pan. And set the pan into a hot oven with a temperature about 400 degrees F. Sear the chicken in this hot oven

for about 30 minutes--or until the surfade is lightly browned.

Then, reduce the oven temperature to about 300 degrees F. and continue the cooking for 1 and 1/2 hours or longer. Baste the chicken occasionally with the pan drippings, and turn it now and then so that it will brown evenly on all sides.

How to tell whether it is done? Pierce on the thighs near the breast. If the juice that runs out does not show a red tinge, the chicken is done.

Serve it on a hot platter garnished with parsley.

Make the gravy with the pan drippings and serve in a hot gravy bowl along with the chicken.

Now about carving. Make it easy for the man who does that job by providing him with a very sharp carving knife and by serving the roast bird on a platter large enough to hold the chicken when it has been cut up. Small platters that barely hold the bird whole make carving extremely difficult and are most inconvenient. The expert carver removes the leg first. Then he cuts off the wing, making the first incision at the point where the wing joins the body. Oh, yes, and here's another point. For the right-handed carver set the platter in front of him so that the feet of the bird pointing to his right. For the left-handed carver, turn the feet in the opposite direction.

Along with a roast chicken, it's always nice to serve some green fresh vegetable--maybe string beans, maybe broccoli, maybe brussels sprouts, and candied sweetpotatoes or mashed white potatoes to go with the green vegetable and cranberry sauce or currant or apple jelly and--but there. We've had enough menus for one week already and I have no intention of wearying you with still another. But I would like to remind you, that whenever you want a good, well-balanced menu featuring chicken, or roast lamb or some other dish that's a special favorite of yours, take a glance at the fine menus in the front of the green cookbook. There are menus there for almost every occasion.

When we were speaking of table decorations yesterday, I forgot to tell you about the miniature garden that our friend W.R.B. has in his dining room.

This fairy garden, as he calls it, is his solution of something bright and colorful for the grey days of winter. You know it's quite a job to keep blooming plants at this time of the year--but a fairy garden keeps fresh and bright all the time.

Here's the way W.R.B. made his garden. He bought a glass globe--an ordinary glass goldfish globe with a round piece of plain glass to use for a cover. This fall he drove out into the country to the home of a friend who has a large tract of woodland. There W.R.B. gathered a little moss, and some small ferns, which he found growing along a brook. He also got a small plant of princess pine, some partridge berry, and a small spray of running cedar. It takes only a very little of each kind of plant to make a fairy garden--not enough to be missed from the woods.

W.R.B. put a little woods soil in the bottom of the glass bowl. Then he lined the bottom of the bowl with moss. In the center of the carpet of moss he planted two very small ferns, and one plant of princess pine. Then he covered the moss with partridge berry plant with its bright, red berries, and round, dark green leaves. The roots of each little plant were tucked snugly into the soil beneath the moss. If your eyes are sharp, you may find in the woods a piece of moss with

the partridge berry plant already growing in it. In that case, just lift it from its home in the woods, and transfer it into the glass bowl or jar.

The next step is to water the moss and the little plants in the bowl, to ~~put~~ on the glass cover, and set the garden in the sunny south window where the temperature will not be too high. The temperature may vary between 45 and 65 or 70 degrees.

If the cover fits fairly tight and there is no loss of moisture from the bowl, it may not be necessary to water the plants for many weeks. But be sure to add enough water to moisten the soil and the moss, when the garden is planted. W.R.B. says that this garden should always be watered with rain water instead of tap water.

Small globes, that is, globes not more than four or five inches in diameter are too small to make happy homes for goldfish, but are just right for fairy gardens, especially gardens to use as centerpieces on the dining room table. Globes about a foot high are best for window decorations. If you can't get the plants from the woods, the florist can probably furnish you with the moss, and the small ferns, and maybe you can buy partridge berries on the market.

A fairy garden makes a delightful Christmas or New Years' gift. An especially nice greeting for a sick friend.

The other day I read such a nice plan for the child who must be in bed on Christmas.

"One of the best methods I know," writes a mother who had the job of entertaining a sick son on Christmas, "is to tie a long string to each of his gifts leaving a loop on the end. After he is fast asleep, place the gifts in different parts of his room, drawing all the strings up over the foot of the bed, so that there will be a row of loops within easy reaching distance. In the morning, hand him a stick, at least a yard long, which you have wound with red and green crepe paper, or, better still, covered with gilt or tinfoil, and which has a hook screwed into the end. In presenting the stick, tell the invalid that it is a "Santa Claus wand" and that he is to wave it and command the gift to appear; then, by slipping the hook into one of the loops, he can easily draw one gift after another to him. One may come from the closet, another from under a chair or bed or from behind the door. The novel way of getting it provides a great deal of interest and fun for the little shut-in."

Tomorrow, the day before Christmas, we'll talk over some Christmas games for the whole family.

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